

**Testimony of the Connecticut Association of Directors of Health**  
*In Support of Committee Bill 5568: An Act Concerning Targeted Health Areas*  
To the Distinguished Co-Chairs and Members of the Commerce Committee  
March 7, 2013

Good morning, distinguished Co-Chairs and Members of the Commerce Committee. My name is Karen Spargo, President of the Connecticut Association of Directors of Health (CADH) and Director of Health of the Naugatuck Valley Health District, serving the towns of Ansonia, Beacon Falls, Derby, Naugatuck, Seymour and Shelton.

CADH supports *Committee Bill 5568: An Act Concerning Targeted Health Areas*. As you know, this bill would establish a Targeted Health Area program and provide economic incentives to physicians providing primary care services or needed medical specialties in such targeted health areas. As health reform expands access to coverage for over 30 million uninsured individuals nationwide, ensuring a sufficient primary care physician workforce becomes critical, especially for Connecticut's most vulnerable and chronic disease-challenged populations. Committee Bill 5568 ensures that newly insured individuals do not meet a new barrier to care: inability to find a primary care physician or needed specialist to provide services.

As you consider policies and programs that expand support for primary prevention, local public health departments welcome the opportunity to be a key partner. Local public health officials are working tirelessly in your communities to provide health education and community outreach on topics including maternal and child health, asthma, and sexually transmitted diseases; to deliver vaccinations against diseases including hepatitis and influenza; and monitoring for reportable diseases through surveillance, report analysis, case investigation and coordination in an effort to reduce disease transmission in local communities throughout the state.

And these are only highlights of the services local health departments provide. In short, we are critical providers of community-based preventive care service and other population-based health initiatives in Connecticut, and we deliver those services in a high-quality, cost-efficient manner. And all while funding is being eroded. According to the Trust for America's Health, almost every state has reported annual cuts to funding in public health from 2008 to the present. Those cuts have had real impact. Local health departments nationally have lost at least 33,000 employees since 2008. Consequently, in 2010, 55% of all local health departments made cuts in at least one program, and 27% made cuts in three or more programs. These cuts, which often fall hardest on prevention programs, will be further compounded once local health departments fully absorb the impact of federal sequestration.

Please consider revising this legislation to provide funding not only to physicians and physician offices in the Targeted Health Area program, but also local health departments in targeted health areas. Public health promotes health programs and policies that support good health; prevents disease outbreaks and conditions that give rise to poor health; and protects people from health threats. As such, public health is critical to ensuring cost containment in statewide health reform by addressing health at a population level, often well before individual problems become acute.

In sum, CADH supports Committee Bill 5568 and urges you to expand financial support to include local health departments. CADH is a nonprofit organization comprised of Connecticut's 74 local health departments and districts. Local health directors are the statutory agents of the Commissioner of Public Health and are critical providers of essential public health services in Connecticut. Thank you for your consideration.